

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

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R 230620Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9471

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 3314

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: (PFOR, PINS, MILI CB

SUBJ: MEKONG CONVOY UPDATE (U)

THE FOLLOWOING TEL SENT ACTION CINCPAC INFO AMEMB SAIGON,  
AMEMB PHNOM PENH MSCOV SAIGON VS, COMSCFE YOKOHAMA JA  
DAO SAIGON, CHMEDTC PHNOM PENH CB FROM USSAG NKP APRT TH/CD  
DATED 220740Z FEB 75, REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO.

QUOTE

SUBJ: MEKONG CONVOY UPDATE (U)

CINCPAC FOR J3/J4

REF: A. USSAG MSG 140100Z FEB 75 (C)

B. CHMEDTC MSG 100306Z FEB 75 (C)

1. (C) ACTIVITIES IN PREPARATION OF MEKONG CONVOY TP-115  
HAVE BEEN GOING ON AT AN ACCELERATED RATE FOR THE PAST  
SEVERAL WEEKS. THERE ARE THREE ELEMENTS TO THE SITUATION:

(1) PREPARATION OF CONVOY IN SOUTH VIETNAM; (2) MNK  
PREPARATION FOR MINE SWEEPING OPERATIONS; AND (3) GROUND  
CLEARING OPERATIONS ALONG LOWER MEKONG. THESE WILL BE  
DISCUSSED SUBSEQUENTLY.

2. (C) PREPARATION OF CONVOY IN SOUTH VIETNAM:

A. AS OUTLINED IN REF A MSC/SEAPAC HAVE BEEN PREPARING  
A MINE COUNTERMEASURE BARGE ARRAY THAT WILL BE PUSHED AHEAD  
OF THE CONVOY BY A SCOOT TUG. THE ARRAY INCLUDES TWO FOAMED  
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BARGES WITH A 9 FT WIDE 2 INCH STUD LINK CHAIN DRAG ON 15

FT CENTERS AND WITH HORIZONTAL CHAINS SEALED EACH 15 FEET. THE TWO FOAMED BARTES WILL HAVE AN EMPTY AMMO BARGE LASHED BEHIND THEM IN ORDER TO PROVIDE STAND-OFF DISTANCE FOR THE TUG. THE MINE BARGE ARRAY HAS BEEN COMPLETED AND WILL BE TESTED AT VUNG TAU DURING THE NEXT TWO DAYS.

B. TO INSURE FRIENDLY AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE AT GROUND LEVEL MSC/SEAPAC HAVE DESIGNED A CONEX BUNKER THAT WILL BE STATIONED FORE AND AFT ON EACH SHIELD BARGE. BUNKER COMPOSED OF TWO STACKED CONEX CONTAINERS SO THAT MACHINE GUN WILL FIRE OVER PROTECTIVE SCREEN. IT IS ANTICIPATED TO HAVE MNK MACHINE GUN TEAM AND TWO MARINES WITH M79'S IN EACH OF THE CONEX BUNKERS WHICH HAVE BEEN PROTECTED BY SHEET STEEL PLATING AND SAND BAGGING. CONVOY TUGS WILL HAVE A SHIELD BARGE WITH TWO BUNKERS EACH ON EACH SIDE, A TOTAL OF FOUR PROTECTIVE BUNKERS PER TUG.

C. THE CHIEF ENGINEER OF THE MNK NAVY VISITED VUNG TAU ON 21 FEB TO INSPECT THE MINE BARGE ARRAY AND THE SHIELD BARGE BUNKERS. HE MADE SEVERAL MINOR RECOMMENDATIONS AND SEEMED SATISFIED WITH THE DESIGNS AND CONCEPTS. THE SHIELD BARGES WILL BE COMPLETED ON 26 FEB.

D. CONVOY TP-115 WILL CONSIST OF THE AFOREMENTIONED MINE BARGE ARRAY AND TWO AMMO BARGES EACH POWERED BY TWO TUGS. SEAPAC HAS STATED THEY WILL BE ABLE TO PROVIDE CREWS FOR THE FIVE TUGS. CONVOY TP-115 IS LIMITED IN SIZE BY TUG ASSETS. CURRENTLY SEAPAC HAS 7 TUGS AVAILABLE, ONE HARBOT TUG AT PHNOM PENH AND SIX AT VUNG TAU. FIVE TUGS WILL BE REQUIRED FOR THE CONVOY AND THE SIXTH WILL BE AT AN LONG/TAN CHAU FOR USE IN CASE OF MECHANICAL FAILURE TO INSURE IMMEDIATE REPLACEMENT SO THAT THE CONVOY SHOULD NOT BE DELAYED BEYOND 0600 HOUR CROSSING TIME. (REF TP-114 WHEN THE TUG HAD A FOULED SCREW AND IT DELAYED THE CONVOY FOR APPROXIMATELY FOUR HOURS.)

E. IN SUMMARY, CONVOY PREPARATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM ARE PROCEEDING SMOOTHLY (SEE REF A AND B). AMMO BARGES ARE LOADED AND READY. SEAPAC HAS FIVE TUGS AND CREWS AVAILABLE TO GO. MINE BARGE ARRAY HAS BEEN COMPLETED AND IS NOW UNDERGOING TESTING. SHIELD BARGE BUNKERS ARE UNDER CONSTRUCTION AND SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY 26 FEB. THEREFORE, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE FOR CONVOY WITH RESPECT TO PREPARATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM IS 28 FEB.

3. (C) MNK PREPARATIONS FOR MINE SWEEPING OPERATIONS.

A. ALTHOUGH MNK HAS BEEN CONTINUOUSLY WORKING ON THEIR MINE SWEEPING CAPABILITY AND PARTICULARLY THE MECHANICAL MAINTENANCE OF THE VESSELS TO BE USED, THIS PROGRESS HAS BEEN SLOW BECAUSE OF OTHER COMMITMENTS. TO PROVIDE RELIEF TO

MNK TO PREPARE FOR TP-115 RESUPPLY OF NEAK LUONG VIA C-130 AIR DROP WAS INITIATED ON 19 FEB. MNK HAS STATED THAT THEIR FLEET WILL BE OPERATIONALLY READY ON 26 FEB. THEY PLAN TO COMMENCE MINE COUNTERMEASURE OPERATIONS 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF CONVOY CROSSING BORDER. THIS EFFORT WILL BE CONCENTRATED AT CHOKE POINT AREAS. THEY ALSO PLAN TO CONDUCT CHAIN DRAG AND MOORED MINE SWEEPING IN ADVANCE OF MINE COUNTERMEASURE BARGE IN VAN OF CONVOY.

B. MEDTC REPORTS MNK ARE PROVIDING LIMITED STAND-OFF PROTECTION FOR MINE COUNTERMEASURE CRAFT BY UTILIZING FENCING AND BY TOWING SOME OLD FRENCH LCVP TYPE CRAFT ALONGSIDE TO INCREASE SURVIVABILITY WHILE OPERATION IN CHOKE POINTS.

C. IN SUMMARY, MNK IS PREPARED TO COMMENCE OPERATIONS ON 26 FEB CONTINGENT UPON SUCCESS OF FANK CLEARING OPERATIONS IN THE LOWER MEKONG.

4. (C) BANK CLEARING OPERATIONS:

A. FANK'S INITIAL PLAN FOR CLEARING OPERATIONS IS NO LONGER OPERATIONAL BECAUSE OF THE LOSS OF PEAM REANG ISLAND. FANK, THEREFORE, HAS ABANDONED THE CONCEPT OF MANNING BASES S-3 AND S-4 AND INTENDS TO SWEEP WEST BANK WITH THE 4TH BDE OPERATING OUT OF BASE S-2. FANK HAS BEEN SLOWLY INTRODUCING EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL INTO BASES S-1 AND S-2. FANK NOW HAS FIVE BNS AND A BDE HDQ AT S-2 AND ONE BN AT S-1. THERE ARE FOUR ARTILLERY PIECES AT S-1 AND 3 ARTILLERY PIECES AT S-2. INITIAL SWEEPING OPERATIONS CONDUCTED FROM S-2 HAVE MET WITH SUCCESS, ON 21 FEB OVER 90 ENEMY WERE KILLED AND A LARGE NUMBER OF WEAPONS CAPTURED. HOWEVER, THE 4TH BDE STILL NEEDS ITS OTHER BNS WHICH ARE CONDUCTING

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

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R 230620Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9472

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 3314

CLEARING OPERATIONS IN THE NEAK LUONG/BANAM PERIMETER.  
ONE BN OF THE 4TH BDE IS SCHEDULED FOR INTRODUCTION INTO  
S-2 ON THE EVENING OF 23 FEB AND THE OTHER BN PROBABLY  
ON 24 OR 25 FEB. IT WILL TAKE AT LEAST 24 HOURS AFTER FINAL  
BN CLOSURE FOR THE BDE TO BECOME OPERATIONALLY PREPARED. IF SUCCESSFUL

THE CLEARING OPERATION WILL TAKE AT LEAST THREE DAYS. THEREFORE, THE EARLIEST THE BANKS CAN BE CLEARED WILL BE 28 FEB. CONSIDERING 48 HOURS MNK MINE SWEEP REQUIREMENT IT NOW APPEARS THAT THE EARLIEST CONVOY DATE WOULD BE 2 MARCH. HQ USSAG BELIEVES THAT THIS IS OPTIMISTIC AND THE BANK CLEARING OPERATIONS WILL NOT BE COMPLETED AT THAT TIME. WE ARE ESTIMATING 4 OR 5 MARCH AS THE EARLIEST DATE FOR THE CONVOY.

B. A CONCOMITANT TO CLEARING BELOW NEAK LUONG IS THE ONGOING EFFORT BY THE TAKEO FORCES UNDER COMMAND OF BG KIEM TRI. THIS TASK FORCE OF 4 BNS HAS TWO MM113 SQUADRONS ATTACHED. ONCE PROGRESS IS MADE PAST THE CURRENT RESTRICTED AREA. THE TERRAIN BECOMES ADEQUATE FOR TWO MM113 SQUADRONS TO MANEUVER AND A BREAK-THROUGH IS POSSIBLE. A ROLL UP BY BG KIEM TRI WOULD GO A LONG WAY TOWARDS INSURING SUCCESS IN THE PEAM REANG ISLAND AREA.

C. KAF WILL PROVIDE FULL AIR SUPPORT DURING THE CONVOY AND IS ALLOCATING AS MUCH AIR SUPPORT AS POSSIBLE NOW AGAINST  
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TARGETS ALONG THE LOWER MEKONG. ARTILLERY COVERAGE IS VITAL. THE ENEMY HAS SHOWN THAT IT CANNOT STAND UP UNDER CONTINUOUS ARTILLERY FIRE. IF FANK CAN PUT ARTILLERY COORDINATION TOGETHER AND BRINGS HEAVY PRESSURE ON THE ENEMY DURING THE NEXT WEEK THEN THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCCESS WILL BE GREATLY INCREASED.

D. IN SUMMARY, CLEARING OPERATIONS ARE BOGGED DOWN. THE TWO-PRONGED ATTACK PLAN ALONG HIGHWAY 1 AND SOUTH FROM S-2 COULD BREAK THINGS OPEN. HOWEVER, FANK NEEDS MORE TROOPS AT NEAK LUONG AND AT S-2 AND MUCH IMPROVED ARTILLERY TO BE SUCCESSFUL.

5. (C) THE THREE CONCOMITANT EFFORTS PREPARING FOR CONVOY TP-115 HAVE BEEN GOING FORWARD TOGETHER. THE SUCCESS OF THE CONVOY IS MOST DEPENDENT UPON MINE SWEEP OPERATIONS WHICH IN TURN ARE DEPENDENT UPON BANK SECURITY.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENT IN THE TIMING OF THE CONVOY IS  
BANK SECURITY. IT WILL BE NECESSARY FOR THE 4TH BDE TO  
SUCCESSFULLY ADVANCE SOUTHWARD FROM S-2 TO PEAM REANG  
ISLAND AND THIS WILL TAKE UNTIL AT LEAST 3 MARCH.

6 (C) MORE DETAILED INFORMATION AVAILABLE AS CONVOY  
DATE APPROACHES. THIS MESSAGE HAS BEEN COORDINATED WITH  
CHMEDTC.  
UNQUOTE  
DEAN

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## Message Attributes

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